published in newspapers in London and Colombo.

Visit of Russian Prime Minister to India

6196. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Russian Prime Minister and his team visited India recently;

(b) if so, the details of the main aims and objectives behind the visit and the details of issues discussed with the President of India and other Indian leaders;

(c) the outcome of the discussions held, alongwith the details of the trade agreement/MOU signed with the Government of India during his visit; and

(d) what are the main features of the agreement and trade treaties signed with Russia and the terms of export and import between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) (a) Yes, Sir. Russian Prime Minister Mr. V.S. Chernomyrdin, accompanied by a high-power delegation visited India on December 23 & 24, 1994.

(b) and (c) Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's visit was the first by a Russian Prime Minister to India. It provided an opportunity to review the progress which had been made in bilateral relations with Russia particularly since Prime Minister's visit to Moscow in June-July 1994. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin called on President and Vice-President; had a one-to-one meeting with Prime Minister; led his delegation for delegation-level talks and addressed a press conference.

In his various meetings Prime Minister Chernomyrdin reiterated Russia's support for India's candidature for a permanent seat on the UN security Council. He stated that Russia was against the internationalisation of the Jammu & Kashmir issue and would like to see it resolved through bilateral dialogue on the basis of the Simla Agreement. At a press conference, he said that Russia was not supplying arms to Pakistan and would not do so in future. A decision was also taken to establish a hot-line between Delhi and Moscow.

During the visit, 8 documents were signed in the fields of promotion and mutual protection of investments; long-term Russian purchases of certain commodities in India; Merchant Shipping; long-term programme of military and technical cooperation upto the year 2000; cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes; broadening the scope of Indo-Russian Joint Commission; multi-entry visas for diplomatic and official passport holders; and cooperation in the field of information.

(d) Agreement in the fields of promotion and mutual proection of investments; long-term Russian purchases of certain commodities in India; and Merchant Shipping directly relate to the measures aimed at promoting and further strengthening Indo-Russian trade and economic relations. Currently Indo-Russian bilateral trade is carried out through hard-currency payments, debt-repayment route and the counter-context trade mechanism. The terms of bilateral trade are subject purely to the market forces.

ICJ Report on Indo-Pak Dispute

6197. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have seen the report of the International Commission of Jurists on the Kashmir problem stating that the Shimla Agreement was normally binding on Pakistan and deprived Islamabad of its locus standi to intervene in the issue, as reported in the 'Times of India' dated the 23rd March, 1995;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Pakistan's ISI network has been giving assistance to the militants in Kashmir; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by Government to make use of the same at the United Nations?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Government has seen and responded to the report of the International Commission of Jurists entitled "Human Rights in Kashmir", which states that Simla Agreement is clearly binding on Pakistan and deprives the Pakistan Government of locus standi to intervene in Jammu and Kashmir. The report also states that it is clear that the Pakistani security service (the ISI) has been giving active assistance to the militants. The Government has noted these points in its comments on ICJ mission's report. Government remains committed to discussing differences with Pakistani bilaterally under the framework of the Simla Agreement.

Cross-Border Movement of Pilgrims between India and Pakistan

6198. SHRI RAM DAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) how many Indian pilgrims visited Pakistan during the last three years and so far in the current year;

(b) how many Pakistani Hindu/Sikh pilgrims visited India during the same period;

whether Government of India propose to take up with the Pakistan Government this importance of increasing cross-border movement of pilgrims from both the countries as a possible way of narrowing down the wedge between India and Pakistan as reported in the 'Hindustan Times' dated the 17th April, 1995 under the caption "More cross-border visits urged"; and

(d) if so, by when talks are proposed to be held and where and which level, whether Foreign Secretary level or at the top level like SAARC?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) According to available information, approximately 7190, 5760, 5370 and 1970 Indian pilgrims visited Pakistan in the years 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively.

(b) During the years 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995 approximate number of Pakistani pilgrims who visited India has been 180, 80, 420 and 580 respectively.

(c) Government in pursuit of greater people-to-people contact, have taken up the matter of opening up more religious shrines in Pakistan and India to visiting pilgrims from the two countries.

Pakistan, regrettably, has adopted a restrictive visa regime even for those religious jathas that visit Pakistan as part of the Indo-Pak Protocol on Religious Shrines, 1974.

Government have specifically proposed that the Sub-commission IV of the Indo-Pak Joint Commission, which deals with visa-related matters as well as other issues under the 1974 Protocol, be immediately re-convened. Pakistan has not yet responded positively to this suggestion.

(d) Government have repeatedly conveyed to Pakistan in the recent period its readiness to hold unconditional bilateral talks at any level to address the entire range of issues between the two countries. Government would urge Pakistan to respond with sincerity to our offer for talks.

Haj Pilgrim visiting Mecca

6199. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of Haj Pilgrims visiting Mecca every year and the